

## STARTLING NEW STATISTICS ON HOMELESS FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Between 53,995 and 62,676 family members were homeless for some period during the year ending June, 1989 in the nine counties of the San Francisco Bay Area. This represents 17,588 to 20,416 families. 9,714 of these families received permanent shelter assistance. These new data are the first hard numbers ever available.

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The attached report of startling new statistics on the number of homeless people in our midst was released by HomeBase at the Bay Area Social Services Consortium Conference on Homeless Families and Children on May 16, 1990 at San Francisco State University, in the Seven Hills Conference Center.

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THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE IN THE NINE-COUNTY BAY AREA  
JULY, 1988 - JUNE 1989

by HomeBase, May 16, 1990

Homeless People

At least 163,621, and as many as 189,927, people experienced an episode of homelessness for some period in the nine-county Bay Area between July, 1988 and June, 1989. This figure, which is far above previous estimates, is based primarily upon an analysis of statistics for the target period from the State of California Department of Social Services and the Departments of Social Services within the nine counties.<sup>1</sup>

These numbers do not include:

- \* the unknown hundreds of individuals and families living in parks, cars and under bridges in the region;
- \* the tens of thousands of individuals sleeping on the couches of friends and family;
- \* homeless youth not in a family unit nor applying for assistance as an adult; or
- \* the families and individuals who are doubling or tripling up in apartments designed for far fewer, and the people living in substandard apartments throughout the region.

Nor does it include:

- \* the estimated 39,900 poor renter households in the region, 61% of whom (as of 1985) were paying at least 70% of their income for housing costs.<sup>2</sup> This population is merely "one personal crisis" away from being on the streets.

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<sup>1</sup>HomeBase has herein adapted the methodology and conclusions on homelessness and statistics generated by Paul Tepper of Shelter Partnership, Los Angeles, California, May 2, 1990. That report found that the number of people in Los Angeles who were homeless for some period was 100,000 - 160,000.

<sup>2</sup> A Place To Call Home, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (April 1990), p. xi.



## Homeless Families

Between 53,995 and 62,676 family members were homeless for some period in the nine-county region during the year ending June, 1989, according to the most recent statistics available from the State Department of Social Services. Included in this figure are 34,472 to 40,015 homeless children.

This estimate is based on data from the AFDC homeless assistance program, which is funded jointly by the State of California and the federal government. This program provides special needs grants to pay for three to four weeks of temporary shelter, last month's rent, a security deposit and other costs necessary to obtain permanent housing. In the 12-month period from July, 1988, to June, 1989, 17,588 requests were approved for temporary shelter assistance for AFDC eligible homeless families in the nine-counties.<sup>3</sup> Each AFDC household includes an average of 1.958 children<sup>4</sup> and an average of 3.072 people.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, these requests for temporary homeless assistance reflect 17,588 AFDC household or 53,995 homeless family members.

This figure is an unduplicated count and is a very conservative estimate for several reasons.

- \* An additional 9,714 requests from homeless families for permanent housing assistance were also approved in the past year in the region.<sup>6</sup> While many of these families also

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<sup>3</sup> State of California, Health and Welfare Agency, Department of Social Services, Statistical Services Section. Aid to Families with Dependent Children, July, 1988 - June, 1989 (revised 12/5/89).

<sup>4</sup> State of California, Health and Welfare Agency, Department of Social Services, Data Processing and Statistical Services Bureau (August 3, 1989) Public Assistance Facts and Figures, June 1989, (attached). In June, 1989, the combined caseload for AFDC-PG (single parent households) and AFDC-U (unemployed parents) was 608,092 cases. These cases included 1,190,664 children.

<sup>5</sup> Public Assistance Facts and Figures, June 1989, ibid. Two parent households constituted 11.44% of all cases. By extension, the average family size is 1.958 children plus 1.114 parents or 3.072 people.

<sup>6</sup> State of California, Health and Welfare Agency, Department of Social Services, Statistical Services Section. Aid to Families with Dependent Children, July, 1988 - June, 1989 (revised 12/5/89).



received temporary shelter assistance, some portion of these families received only permanent shelter benefits. Assuming a 90% duplication rate, which means 10% of the families receiving permanent shelter assistance did not receive temporary shelter assistance, there are another 971 homeless families.

- \* Some AFDC eligible homeless families did not apply for AFDC homeless assistance.
- \* Some homeless families were denied AFDC homeless assistance or are not eligible for that aid. This includes:
  - \* Homeless families that applied for but did not receive AFDC homeless assistance. The state reported that 1837 requests for homeless assistance in the region were denied during the year. Homeless families may be ineligible for AFDC because one parent is working more than 100 hours a month or a family which is eligible for AFDC cannot qualify for temporary shelter assistance if the family is staying at a shelter for free. Other AFDC eligible families are denied homeless assistance for procedural reasons, such as inadequate verification. Assuming a very conservative rate of 5% for AFDC homeless assistance ineligible families, there are an additional 928 homeless families.
  - \* Some homeless families are undocumented and do not qualify for AFDC homeless assistance. Assuming that they account for an additional 5%, there are an additional 928 homeless families.

Taking these additional factors into consideration, the number of homeless families in the Bay Area region may be as high as 20,416 and the number of homeless people in those families exceeding 50,000.

### Homeless Individuals

The state does not record statistics on the number of homeless single people receiving or applying for county-funded general assistance, or federally funded SSI. The county records on these programs do not differentiate homeless from non-homeless applicants.



## Homeless Population Overall

Nationally, the number of homeless families is reported to be about 30% of all homeless people.<sup>7</sup> Extrapolating from the known number of families homeless at some point in the study year to a number of people homeless at some point overall, the best estimate is between 163,621 and 189,927. Note: This extrapolation is so startling that we also computed the number of homeless people in San Francisco separately. Since there are 7,000 homeless family members in San Francisco, representing 15% of all San Francisco homeless people (15% was reported by San Francisco for 1988 to the U.S. Conference of Mayors<sup>8</sup>), the lowest total number of people homeless at some point in time in San Francisco would, therefore, be 46,667.

## Conclusion

As many studies have noted, it is quite difficult to obtain an exact count of people without a home. The figures cited above represent the most current, accurate numbers available. The examination of the welfare department records of the State of California and the nine counties, public bodies mandated by law to care for the indigent, offers researchers the broadest and most comprehensive pool of data extant.

Because of the inherent difficulties in enumeration methods, HomeBase has found little practical value in additional enumeration studies. At best, these efforts provide a modest refinement of existing estimates and, at worst, they divert important resources and attention away from more important issues related to the actual needs of homeless persons and families. Every community has an identifiable population of homeless persons which far exceeds the capacity of the shelter and service system. Are more numbers really needed when even the most obvious needs cannot be accommodated? This is a critical policy question which must be thoroughly explored before a final focus for any other studies can be determined.

The astonishing increase in the incidence of people without a home underscores the depth of the problems of increasing poverty and the lack of affordable housing, the two most commonly cited causes of homelessness. There were 101,700 poor households in 1985, in Alameda, San Francisco, Contra Costa, San Mateo and

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<sup>7</sup> Homelessness, Health, & Human Needs, National Academy of Sciences (September, 1988); Number of Homeless People in L.A. County, July 1988-1989, Shelter Partnership (May 2, 1990).

<sup>8</sup> A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities: 1988, the U.S. Conference of Mayors (January 1989).



Marin counties alone. Santa Clara County poor households in 1984 numbered 28,000.

Further, as of January, 1990, the maximum AFDC benefit provided to a family of three in California was \$695 a month, higher than in most other states. Yet the Fair Market Rent -- HUD's estimate of the cost of a modest two-bedroom apartment -- was \$887 a month in San Francisco, San Mateo and Marin counties and \$736 a month in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. Thus, in each of these jurisdictions, the Fair Market Rent alone was greater than the maximum AFDC benefit.<sup>9</sup>

In the San Francisco Bay Area, as nationally, homelessness continues to rise. Public Advocate's 1987 study, Avenues Out Of Despair, noted the nine counties were then reporting 45,000 - 47,000 homeless people in our region.

Public debate should not focus on the precise number of homeless people, but rather how our institutions should address the underlying problems of increasing poverty and lack of affordable housing. The plight of the poor and the plight of people without a home are inextricably intertwined. As poverty increases, so will homelessness. As poverty increases, the quality of life for all declines.

Martin Luther King noted, "If we don't use her [America's] vast resources of wealth to end poverty and make it possible for all of God's children to have the basic necessities for life, she too, will go to hell." The findings of this study offer a potent signpost regarding our society's direction. We hope that policy makers will heed the warning.

### Methodology

The purpose of this study was to develop an accurate estimate of the number of people in the region who were homeless, at least once, in the period July 1988 to June 1989. Because of the well recognized difficulty of individually counting this population, it was determined that the most reasonable mechanism to obtain an accurate count was to utilize already existing data gathered by public social service agencies who already work with the target population.

Consequently, we obtained current public assistance data compiled by the State Department of Social Services. We subsequently adjusted the data to account, 1) for the percentage of the population who were homeless, 2) to remove any duplication of those who received from more than one program, 3) for homeless

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<sup>9</sup>A Place To Call Home, p. xix.

non-applicants, 4) for homeless, non-benefit eligible individuals. Adjustments were made primarily based upon public data as well as recent governmental studies.

Please see accompanying statistics.

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# HOMELESS PEOPLE IN THE 9 COUNTIES OF THE BAY AREA: STATISTICS

## BASE DATA

Average Family Size	3.072
% of AFDC Perm. Homeless Asst. recipients that also received Temp Asst.	90%
% of homeless families that are AFDC-ineligible (non-undocumented)	5%
% of homeless who are undocumented	5%
% of all homeless people who are in family units	15-30%

## FAMILIES

	FAMILIES	PARENTS & CHILDREN	CHILDREN ONLY
<b>1. AFDC Temporary Shelter Approvals</b>			
Alameda	5,650	17,346	11,074
Contra Costa	2,760	8,473	5,410
Marin	212	651	416
Napa	368	1,130	721
San Francisco	2,280	7,000	4,468
San Mateo	1,077	3,306	2,111
Santa Clara	2,321	7,125	4,549
Solano	1,689	5,185	3,310
Sonoma	<u>1,231</u>	<u>3,779</u>	<u>2,413</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<u>17,588</u>	<u>53,995</u>	<u>34,472</u>
<b>2. AFDC Permanent Shelter Approvals</b>			
Alameda	2,721		
Contra Costa	1,978		
Marin	158		
Napa	308		
San Francisco	840		
San Mateo	535		
Santa Clara	1,192		
Solano	1,071		
Sonoma	<u>911</u>		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<u>9,714</u>		

## FAMILIES

PARENTS &  
CHILDRENCHILDREN  
ONLY**3. Unduplicated AFDC Permanent Shelter Recipients**

Alameda	272	835	533
Contra Costa	198	608	388
Marin	16	49	31
Napa	31	95	61
San Francisco	84	258	164
San Mateo	54	166	106
Santa Clara	119	365	233
Solano	107	328	209
Sonoma	<u>91</u>	<u>279</u>	<u>178</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>972</u></b>	<b><u>2983</u></b>	<b><u>1,903</u></b>

**4. Total AFDC Homeless Recipients**

Alameda	5,922	18,180	11,607
Contra Costa	2,958	9,081	5,798
Marin	228	700	447
Napa	399	1,225	782
San Francisco	2,364	7,257	4,633
San Mateo	1,131	3,472	2,216
Santa Clara	2,440	7,490	4,782
Solano	1,796	5,513	3,520
Sonoma	<u>1,322</u>	<u>4,058</u>	<u>2,591</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>18,560</u></b>	<b><u>56,976</u></b>	<b><u>36,376</u></b>

**5. AFDC Ineligible for Homeless Assistance Program**

Alameda	296	909	580
Contra Costa	148	454	290
Marin	12	37	24
Napa	20	61	39
San Francisco	118	362	231
San Mateo	56	172	110
Santa Clara	122	375	239
Solano	90	276	176
Sonoma	<u>66</u>	<u>203</u>	<u>129</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>928</u></b>	<b><u>2,849</u></b>	<b><u>1,818</u></b>



	FAMILIES	PARENTS & CHILDREN	CHILDREN ONLY
<b>6. Undocumented</b>			
Alameda	296	909	580
Contra Costa	148	454	290
Marin	11	34	24
Napa	20	61	39
San Francisco	118	362	231
San Mateo	57	175	110
Santa Clara	122	375	239
Solano	90	276	176
Sonoma	<u>66</u>	<u>203</u>	<u>129</u>
TOTAL	<u>928</u>	<u>2,849</u>	<u>1,818</u>

**7. Total Homeless People: Composite of Above Data**  
 (Taking into account the base data, and items #1-6 above,  
 this chart reflects the final computations)

Alameda	6,514	19,998	12,767
Contra Costa	3,254	9,990	6,378
Marin	251	771	492
Napa	439	1,347	860
San Francisco	2,600	7,981	5,096
San Mateo	1,244	3,819	2,438
Santa Clara	2,684	8,240	5,261
Solano	1,976	6,066	3,873
Sonoma	<u>1,454</u>	<u>4,464</u>	<u>2,850</u>
TOTAL	<u>20,416</u>	<u>62,676</u>	<u>40,015</u>

Table 1: Summary of Data			
Category	Item	Value	Unit
Group A	Item 1	100	kg
	Item 2	200	kg
	Item 3	300	kg
	Item 4	400	kg
	Item 5	500	kg
	Item 6	600	kg
	Item 7	700	kg
	Item 8	800	kg
	Item 9	900	kg
	Item 10	1000	kg
Total for Group A			
Group B	Item 1	150	kg
	Item 2	250	kg
	Item 3	350	kg
	Item 4	450	kg
	Item 5	550	kg
	Item 6	650	kg
	Item 7	750	kg
	Item 8	850	kg
	Item 9	950	kg
	Item 10	1050	kg
Total for Group B			
Grand Total			

Table 2: Detailed Data			
Category	Item	Value	Unit
Group A	Item 1	100	kg
	Item 2	200	kg
	Item 3	300	kg
	Item 4	400	kg
	Item 5	500	kg
	Item 6	600	kg
	Item 7	700	kg
	Item 8	800	kg
	Item 9	900	kg
	Item 10	1000	kg
Group B	Item 1	150	kg
	Item 2	250	kg
	Item 3	350	kg
	Item 4	450	kg
	Item 5	550	kg
	Item 6	650	kg
	Item 7	750	kg
	Item 8	850	kg
	Item 9	950	kg
	Item 10	1050	kg
Grand Total			

Table 3: Summary of Data			
Category	Item	Value	Unit
Group A	Item 1	100	kg
	Item 2	200	kg
	Item 3	300	kg
	Item 4	400	kg
	Item 5	500	kg
	Item 6	600	kg
	Item 7	700	kg
	Item 8	800	kg
	Item 9	900	kg
	Item 10	1000	kg
Group B	Item 1	150	kg
	Item 2	250	kg
	Item 3	350	kg
	Item 4	450	kg
	Item 5	550	kg
	Item 6	650	kg
	Item 7	750	kg
	Item 8	850	kg
	Item 9	950	kg
	Item 10	1050	kg
Grand Total			



## INTRODUCING HOMEBase

There are enough homeless people in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area to make up a mid-sized city. Recent statistics from the State of California Department of Social Services and the Departments of Social Services within the nine Bay Area counties show that between 53,995 and 62,676 family members were homeless for some period during the year ending June, 1989 in the nine counties. This represents 17,588 to 20,416 families. Of these 9,714 families received permanent shelter assistance. This data represents the first hard numbers available on the homeless population. A recent survey of policymakers and service providers conducted by Public Advocates, a public interest law firm, showed that a paucity of affordable housing and shelter space, inadequate individual and family incomes, and fragmented social service delivery systems were key factors perpetuating homelessness. The survey also revealed that there was a growing consensus in the Bay Area that approaching homelessness on a coordinated, regional basis would foster the kind of policies and programs needed to confront the root causes of homelessness, while continuing to develop effective emergency services, where needed.

It was in response to this information that Public Advocates launched **HomeBase**, a Regional Support Center for Homelessness Policy and Programs, in January, 1989. With initial funding from the Hewlett Foundation, and the collaboration of the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), **HomeBase** staff and volunteers are now working on a Core Program which includes four major areas of activity:

\*Regional Planning - designing short and long-term strategies for addressing homelessness on a regional basis, creating models of how government, non-profit organizations and private enterprise can work together in planning and delivering solutions.

\*Policy and Program Research - responding to policy and program development needs by conducting comprehensive research and formulating recommendations on such topics as coordinating social service delivery and case management, and breaking the link between eviction and homelessness through early intervention and tenant assistance.

\*Program Support - providing program assistance to those currently developing and delivering concrete solutions and services to homeless people -- for example, coordinating the development of a day services center, and developing a Master Funding Calendar.

\*Public Education - contributing to the general understanding of Bay Area residents about who homeless people are, the economic, social and legal factors creating homelessness, and what we all can do to alleviate this crisis. See our publication, "Homelessness in the Bay Area: The Ten Points".

The small permanent staff at **HomeBase** benefits from the efforts of student externs, community volunteers, the ongoing support of Public Advocates, the participation of ABAG, and input from our Advisory Committees and other homeless advocates. Our goal at **HomeBase** is to help communities move beyond crisis management toward constructive long-lasting change. We hope that you will contribute toward these efforts in whatever way you can. Please contact **HomeBase** at the address below for more information.



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